



NRC NEWS

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NRC WELCOMES NATIONAL ACADEMIES RECOMMENDATIONS ON RADIATION SOURCE REPLACEMENT

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission today welcomed the recommendation by the National Academies that any effort to replace radiation sources with alternative technologies should proceed with caution in order to minimize disruption in vital areas of industry, medicine and research.

NRC is already addressing many of the issues raised by the National Academies report, "Radiation Source Use and Replacement," and its recommendations. The Radiation Source Protection and Security Task Force, mandated by Congress in the Energy Policy Act of 2005, is analyzing potential impacts of so-called "dirty bombs" and radiation exposure devices, the potential for replacing cesium chloride sources, and alternative technologies for radioactive sources. The task force is comprised of 14 federal agencies, including the NRC, as well as state regulators.

Independent of these efforts, the NRC and state regulators have taken strong action over the past six years to increase the security of radioactive sources, and additional measures are under consideration.

"We applaud the National Academies for urging caution in any effort to replace radioactive materials with alternative technologies," said NRC Chairman Dale E. Klein. "Safely used and secured, these materials provide important benefits to our nation's health, safety and economic strength."

The radioactive sources in question are used to treat millions of patients each year in diagnostic and therapeutic medical procedures. They provide critical capabilities in the oil and gas, electrical power, construction and food industries, and are used in technology research and development.

The National Academies report was one of three studies of alternatives to radioactive materials mandated by the Energy Policy Act of 2005. That law also created the Radiation Source Protection and Security Task Force and directed a separate report by the Department of Energy, which was submitted to Congress in 2006.

Even while researching alternatives, the NRC has continued to strengthen security requirements for radioactive sources.

“The security of radioactive sources is a top priority for the NRC,” Klein said. “Along with state agencies and our federal partners, we have taken strong steps to reduce the danger of these materials falling into the wrong hands. Our constant vigilance in this area will help maintain the beneficial uses of these materials as the federal government, states and industry explore potential alternatives.”

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